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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001301

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL KSUM BR

SUBJECT: BRAZIL'S LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN SUMMIT:

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OR CIRCLING THE WAGONS?

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Lisa Kubiske, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Brazilian officials are describing the first-ever Latin America/Caribbean Summit, to be held in Salvador, Bahia December 16-17, as an opportunity for the region to discuss its own agenda. With no more than an indicative focus on integration and development as the stated theme of the summit, the region's foreign ministers have been invited to Rio de Janeiro for a preparatory meeting on October 6. GOB contacts have insisted that it is in no way connected to the 2009 Summit of the Americas, but fits into Brazil's "concentric circles" of foreign policy. At UNGA President Lula described the meeting as an opportunity for the region to meet "without tutelage" from "major powers." In light of current regional rivalries, the lack of concerted preparation, and the much more developed SOA process, this new forum is unlikely to present an immediate challenge to the SOA as the hemisphere's premier forum, and we should continue to press the GOB to engage actively with us to find initiatives our governments can pursue jointly for the 2009 SOA and beyond. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In separate conversations with EconCouns and Poloffs, Brazilian Foreign Ministry (Itamaraty) and presidency officials have described the planned December 16-17 Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Integration and Development as a "first-ever" opportunity for the region to meet "alone" to discuss its own agenda. The summit will include all 33 countries in the region, differing from the Summit of the Americas (SOA) process only by including Cuba and leaving out the United States and Canada. South America I (Mercosul) Department head Joao Luiz Pereira Pinto, who has responsibility for the summit, told Poloffs that the idea for the summit is unrelated to the UN's GRULAC, and the timing is unrelated to the 2009 SOA--it is simply an opportunity for the region's leaders to meet, something which they have never done before without other actors present. Amb. Marcel Biato at the presidency's foreign policy unit also denied there was any attempt to undermine the SOA process. He told PolCouns that the meeting was simply a logical addition to Brazil's "concentric circles" of foreign relations. These start with Mercosul and now include UNASUL (the new Union of South American Nations), the Rio Group, the Summit of the Americas, and a growing number of inter-regional summits, including the India-Brazil-South Africa dialogue (IBAS), the BRICs dialogue, the G-8-related G-5, the WTO-related G-20, the Summit of Portuguese-Language Countries, the South-America/Arab Countries Summit (ASSA), the Ibero-American Summit, the EU-Latin America/Caribbean Summit, and the Latin America-East Asia Cooperation Forum, among others.

¶3. (SBU) At the same time, in his September 24 speech at the UN General Assembly, President Lula referred to the summit as an opportunity for regional leaders to meet "without tutelage." This aspect of the meeting has not been lost on the media, either; a September 30 report in leading Brazilian daily Estado de Sao Paulo on the various fora in which Brazil is active called the meeting "a Latin American integration project based on existing blocs, de-linked from the interference of the United States." Academics and foreign policy experts cited in the report agreed that Brazil is seeking to create fora where it can be a major player, while minimizing the influence of the United States and Europe.

¶4. (SBU) Plans for this latest summit are ill-defined. The head of Itamaraty's Regional Integration and ALADI Department, Paulo Franca, told EconCouns that Brazil was seeking to create "an inclusive process" in developing the agenda and to avoid any suggestion that the GOB was trying to control the agenda. Brazil has proposed integration and development, food security, energy, physical infrastructure, social development, and sub-regional and regional cooperation as possible issues for discussion. But the GOB does not intend to table any papers or draft statements on these topics. Instead, they want to keep the meeting at a "political level" and expect foreign ministers to define the agenda on October 6 when they convene in Rio de Janeiro for the only preparatory meeting prior to the summit itself. Franca said that the GOB has no pre-conceived ideas of initiatives that might arise from the summit, and foresees only the possibility of a joint statement from the Summit. The idea is for leaders to discuss what is important to them. According to Itamaraty officials, Mexico and Argentina, among others, expressed enthusiasm for the summit idea. However, the lack of a clear agenda has left some regional diplomats in Brasilia scratching their heads about the

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purpose of the meeting; in separate conversations, Argentine, Peruvian, and Paraguayan diplomats told poloff they were not clear why the meeting was being held.

¶5. (C) Comment: Unlike the U.S. approach to the Pathways initiative, which we have stressed is intended to be inclusive, the GOB at the highest levels has singled out this forum as being exclusive of "major powers," making it difficult to take lower level assurances that it is simply another regional forum entirely at face value. The GOB is sincere in its desire to work with us, both bilaterally and multilaterally, toward common objectives. At the same time, there is an influential segment within both senior policy circles and Itamaraty that actively seeks to avoid and minimize ties to the United States, in part by favoring fora that do not include the United States. In that vein, the creation of a Latin America/Caribbean forum so close in membership to the SOA and the OAS serves to some extent to undermine the ideal of a united Western Hemisphere of democratic nations, while advancing the notion that there is a divide in the hemisphere between the two wealthiest nations and everyone else. Nonetheless, in light of current regional rivalries, the lack of concerted preparation, and the much more developed SOA process, this new forum is unlikely to present an immediate challenge to the SOA as the hemisphere's premier forum. With that in mind, although Brazil has in the past been relatively unenthusiastic about the SOA, we should continue to press the GOB to engage actively with us to find initiatives our governments can pursue jointly for the 2009 SOA and beyond.

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